

# WESTGATE BAPTIST COMMUNITY

## CHURCH SAFETY POLICY AND PROCEDURE (2020)

### **Policy:**

This Church Safety Policy and Procedure was approved by the Westgate Baptist Community meeting held on May 17, 2020. This policy will be reviewed every two years and we undertake to seek views, comments and suggestions from vulnerable adults, children, parents, carers, staff and volunteers. It applies to all staff, volunteers, children and individuals involved in our organisation. Our church commits to continuous improvement through monitoring, reviewing and adapting policies and procedures in response to changing circumstances, legislation and the needs of those in our care.

This church is committed to promoting the welfare of all children, young people and vulnerable adults who participate in any of its ministries or activities by protecting their rights and also protecting them from harm. We do this through fostering a culture of child and adult safety through constant communication and reinforcement of this commitment at all levels and ministries in our church.

This is to be achieved through the following:

1. A Church Safety Policy committing the organisation to providing a safe environment for children, young people and vulnerable adults.
2. A Code of Conduct covering pastors, staff and volunteers who may come into contact with children and vulnerable adults.
3. A process for screening applicants for ministry, employment and volunteering, including referee checks and working with children / criminal record checks.
4. A process for handling allegations of sexual abuse
5. A process for complying with mandatory reporting obligations
6. Training for pastors, employees and volunteers in the above policies and procedures

These policies and procedures are to be read and implemented alongside relevant legislation related to the protection and welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults.

For the purposes of this policy a child is considered anyone up to the age of 18. All children are considered vulnerable. A vulnerable adult is a person who is more susceptible to harm due to factors such as (but not limited to) advanced age, disability, illness, residency status, financial hardship and past experience of abuse.

### **Procedure:**

Our mandate comes directly from God. God identified classes of vulnerable people who are to be protected and given special care and treatment in society because of their powerlessness (e.g. Ex 22:21-22, Deut 10:17-19, Jer 22:2-4, James 1:27). We also live in a country that legislates for people's safety, particularly in the area of child protection. This procedure has been developed to help us live out in a practical way our Biblical mandate and our responsibilities under State and Federal legislation.

## **Commitment to safety**

All people who come to Westgate Baptist Community and its ministries have a right to feel and be safe, to be respected and to have their views and opinions valued at all times. The welfare of the vulnerable people in our care will always be our priority and we have zero tolerance towards abuse.

We teach all people attending our programs about what they can do if they feel unsafe.

Risk Assessments will be carried out for all Approved Ministries of the community.

We listen to and act on any concerns children, parents, carers, and adults raise with us.

We are intentionally inclusive, such as by including all vulnerable people and their parents and carers in planning and decision making wherever possible. We do not tolerate any discriminatory practices.

Westgate Baptist Community staff and volunteers proactively encourage children and vulnerable adults to express their views and give suggestions, especially on matters that directly affect them.

Our Safe Church culture is embedded in all levels of our organisation. Our Commitment to Safety is used freely in staff email signatures, event flyers, notice at the entrance to the building, job advertisements.

*Westgate Baptist Community is committed to ensuring the safety and well being of all, particularly children, young people and vulnerable adults.*

## **Screening process**

Westgate Baptist Community applies best practice standards in the recruitment and screening of staff and volunteers. Our screening process helps us to minimise the risk of abuse, ministry misconduct and the misuse of power within the church. It enables us to be fair and transparent in our screening processes for all staff and volunteers.

Documentation of the screening process will be kept confidential and secured by the Pastor in the church safe

We will screen and train all prospective leaders in our ministries before they are appointed and will screen and train all existing leaders. Prior to recruitment the position description will be reviewed and updated if necessary.

- i) Applicants must demonstrate willingness to commit to the mission and values of the Community and to all Safe Church Policies and Procedures.
- ii) Applicants will be interviewed. The interview panel will include at least two from the following: the ministry coordinator, the senior Pastor, deacons, Safe Church Committee members, as a part of an accountable recruitment, selection and appointment team. One of the interview panel will be the program leader/supervisor.

iii) The applicant must provide at least two referees and one of the interviewers must contact these referees. One of the referees must be from the immediate previous Church if the applicant is not from Westgate Baptist Community

iv) Successful applicants will:

- \* hold a current Working with Children Check (volunteer or employee as applicable)

- \* undergo a National Police Criminal Record Check. The following roles require a police check every **three** years: staff, ministry coordinators and senior leadership (including deacons, treasurer and secretary; whether paid or volunteer).

- \* complete **EITHER** the *Application and Induction Form for Staff, Deacons, Treasurer, Secretary, Safe Church Officer and Ministry Coordinators of 'Approved Ministries'*.

**OR** the *Application and Induction Form for Volunteers under the Supervision of Staff or Ministry Coordinators*

- \* Participate in a documented induction process to enable them to safely fulfil their position. They will be given a copy of the following documents relevant to their role and will be required to sign that they “have received, read, and agree to be bound by and uphold each of the Safe Church Policy and Process documents.”

Position Description

Code of Conduct

Church Safety Policy

Process for Handling and Reporting Allegations of Sexual Abuse.

v) Induction will familiarise the individual with formal or informal support mechanisms, so that staff and volunteers have a clear understanding of who to go to for support and what type of support is available to them (for example, team meetings, counselling, prayer).

There will be a minimum period of 6 months of regularly attending Westgate Baptist Community for all prospective deacons, treasurer, secretary and ministry coordinators.

If offences are identified through the above process, depending on the nature of the offence/s, it will remain the discretion of the senior pastor and leadership team as to the applicant's future involvement in Westgate Baptist Community.

Sexual abuse-related offences will preclude that person from having any contact with, or responsibilities involving children/youth. In some cases an offender may not be permitted to attend the church, or any associated program under any circumstances. The BUV Professional Standards Consultant must be contacted and consulted in this situation.

## **Training**

We commit to ongoing leadership training, supervision and support for leaders (pastors, employees and volunteers). They must agree to follow the Code of Conduct and will receive training on the requirements of the Code before signing, so that it is understood and put into practice.

We require all staff and volunteers to be familiar with and trained in the Church Safety Policy and Procedure; Code of Conduct; Handling and Reporting Allegations of Sexual Abuse. This may occur prior to commencing ministry through a meeting with the ministry coordinator or may be part of regular training for the whole team.

We require the following staff and volunteers to attend a Safe Church Awareness Workshop (or equivalent) within their first year of ministry and attend a refresher workshop every three years.

Staff, secretary, treasurer, deacons, safe church officer, main leader(s) or coordinators(s) of 'Approved Ministries of the Community'.

This training covers a range of topics including risk management, indicators of abuse, responding to disclosures, and mandatory reporting of suspected sexual abuse. It is open to anyone 16 years of age and over.

Additional ministry-specific training will be provided as required. This may include but is not limited to: Church Administration Workshop, First Aid, Food Safety and Handling.

Pastors must engage with the BUV accreditation process (including attending BUV Professional standards workshops), receive training in responding to complaints and safety concerns raised, as well as some form of guided reflective practice such as: supervision, coaching, mentoring or spiritual direction.

Staff, Deacons, Treasurer and Secretary of Westgate Baptist Community have the responsibility to ensure that church programs are adequately resourced with staff and volunteers and have the required equipment for the safe and effective running of the program. They will provide ongoing support and supervision for all staff and volunteers, to ensure they feel valued, respected and fairly-treated. Additionally, they will undertake with each leader/volunteer an annual process of position review to provide an opportunity for mutual feedback and encouragement.